

The Giver: Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1:

- The character of Jonas is introduced. He is an 11 year old boy attempting to find the right word to describe his emotions about an upcoming event.
- He discusses a time he was frightened by an aircraft flying over his community, a forbidden act in his society.
- We learn about his structured community where rules play an important role. In fact, orders and rules are often spoken over a loud speaker in the community
- The pilot of the aircraft was 'released', which we learn is a disgraceful punishment.
- At dinner that evening, Jonas' family (father, mother, sister) participate in the "telling of feelings" where each member of the family shares an emotion they felt that day.
- Lily felt anger at a new boy who was not following the rules. Her parents discuss it with her and she realizes that perhaps the boy did not feel comfortable and she becomes less angry.
- Jonas' father is a Nurturer in the community as he takes care of the community's babies. He describes the issues with a baby who is a candidate for release. The family may take care of him, but they would not be permitted to adopt as only one male and one female child are permitted per household.
- Jonas feels apprehensive about the Ceremony of Twelve, when he will be assigned his career with the rest of the children in the community.

Chapter 2

- Every year, there are fifty babies. And when they turn One, they get named.
- Jonas's Father confesses that he can sneak a peak at the naming list before it's publicly announced. As a matter of fact, he's already done so for the little sick baby boy he talked about earlier. The child's name is Gabriel. Or "Gabe," as Jonas's Father likes to call him.
- We learn in December, all the children in the community are promoted to their next age. With each age comes a new responsibility or privilege.
- Jonas' parents reassure him that the Committee Of Elders chose careers very carefully. They observe the Elevens all year during school, play, and volunteer hours to help them choose an appropriate career. After the Ceremony of 12, age is no longer important.
- Jonas worries about his own assignment, but also about his friend Asher, who does not have any serious interests.

- Lily comes into the room and asks for her 'comfort object' which the community gives to young children.

Chapter 3

- Jonas' father brings the baby Gabriel home from The Nurturing Center to spend some nights with them.
- Lily makes notice of Gabriel's light colored eyes which are similar to Jonas'. In this society, it is not polite to bring notice to someone's physical traits, so Lily is being slightly rude.
- Lily hopes when she is a Twelve, she will be assigned the role of Birthmother. Lily's mother strongly discourages this as Birthmother's carry little honor as they are treated very well for three years as they produce children, but are then forced to do hard labor the rest of their lives.
- Jonas recalls a time when the community loudspeaker reprimanded him by making an announcement directed at him for taking an apple from school. Jonas took the apple because he noticed that it changed in a way. He wasn't sure how, but something about it changed as his friend Asher threw it in the air.

Chapter 4

- Jonas meets Asher for their volunteer work. Children from eight to eleven must volunteer at different locations to determine an appropriate career path.
- Today Jonas is volunteering at The House Of Old. Here he gives a bath to an elderly woman. While it is not permitted to look at others naked in this society, the elderly and babies are an exception.
- Jonas and the woman discuss the release of one of the old (Roberto). She describes the release as a celebration as his life story was told, and he was happy to be released.

Chapter 5

- The family morning ritual is to tell their dreams to each other. While Jonas does not often dream, he experienced one the night before.
- Jonas dreams that he is in the Bath House of the House Of The Old. He is there with Fiona and he wants her to remove her clothes so he can bathe her. He says he felt a strong wanting for Fiona.
- Jonas' parents explain that the feelings he is experiencing are called "stirrings". These stirrings happen to everyone around Jonas' age, and treatment is required. The reader can infer that these stirrings are sexual arousal. Jonas is required to take a pill every morning to stop these thoughts.

Chapter 6

- Some of the age milestones are discussed in this chapter. We learn that at age seven, children get a jacket they can button themselves, at eight they begin to volunteer, at nine they get bikes and girls can get rid of their hair ribbons.
- The naming ceremony is what happens when children turn one. All of the children at the Nurturing Center are given a name.
- Gabriel did not weight enough or sleep through the night. Most children like this are released, but Jonas' father is given an extra year to take care of him.
- One of the children named this year was a replacement for a child that had been 'lost' in the river. When he died, the community had a Ceremony of Loss where they chanted the boy's name (Caleb) loudly at first, and then softer. When the child was replaced, they chanted his name softly, then more loudly.
- The elevens discuss the Ceremony of Twelve. They discuss what happens when someone does not get an assignment they want. It seems that the process leads to nowhere. They also reveal that if a citizen feels they do not want to live in the community they can apply for Elsewhere and they will disappear.
- Jonas is no longer worried about his assignment because he trusts that the elders will choose an appropriate assignment.

Chapter 7

- Jonas and the Elevens line up in order of their birth number for the Ceremony of Twelve
- The Chief Elder gives a speech and begins going through the students to give them their assignments.
- Jonas' friend Asher is given the assignment of Assistant Director Of Recreation.
- We learn through a humorous story about Asher that the teachers at the Childcare center receive a 'smack' when they do not follow rules or do something properly.
- When it comes to Jonas' number, the Chief Elder skips him. He is very concerned.

Chapter 8

- At the end of the Ceremony, the Chief Elder apologizes to Jonas, and explains that he has been selected to be The Receiver of Memory. The current Receiver is sitting with the elders and has the same colored eyes as Jonas.
- We learn that The Receiver must be a person with a great deal of intelligence, integrity, and courage. He/She must also be able to attain wisdom with time. It also requires the ability to 'see beyond'. The Chief Elder explains that the Receiver will experience physical pain in his role.

Chapter 9

- Jonas begins to feel like people are treating him differently which makes him feel isolated. When he asks about the previous Receiver who failed in her duties, they will not speak about her.
- When Jonas goes to bed, he looks over his assignment folder which outlines information about being the Receiver. He learns he is exempt from rules governing rudeness and lying. He is not permitted to discuss training or his dreams with anyone, and he also can't apply for release.

Chapter 10

- Jonas reports to The House of Old for his first day of training as the Receiver. He is brought to the Receiver's home.
- The home is more lavish than an average home. There are hundreds of books which piques Jonas' curiosity, since his home only has three books.
- Jonas meets the Receiver who tells him that he looks much older than he is, but he will use his last bit of strength to train Jonas. He does this by transmitting memories to him which have been passed down from other Receivers. By receiving these memories, Jonas will gain wisdom and insight to help the community.
- The first memory he transmits is that of snow. Jonas lays face-down and the Receiver touches Jonas' back.

Chapter 11

- He can feel the cold and enjoys a memory of sledding.
- The Receiver tells Jonas that this memory is an old one before the community "went to Sameness".
- The next memory he transmits is of sunshine. Afterwards, Jonas asks about the pain mentioned by the Chief Elder at the ceremony. The Receiver transmits the memory of a sunburn to give him the idea.
- At the end of their session, the Receiver says that Jonas can now call him The Giver.

Chapter 12

- Jonas does not struggle with following the rules of his new position as his family and friends do not question him about it.
- He bicycles with Fiona and notices her hair changes in the same way the apple does. When he arrives at The Giver's living area, he asks if that is what it means to 'see beyond'. The Giver examples that Jonas is starting to see the color red.
- We learn that the community got rid of colors. The Giver explains that in order to gain control, some things needed to be eliminated.

Chapter 13

- Jonas learns about all the different colors, and he starts to see them in his life.

- Jonas begins to feel frustration that the members of his community are not given any choice (spouse, job etc), but also considers that they may make the wrong choices if they were able to make their own decisions.
- Jonas tries to get Asher to see colors, and to transmit a memory to Lily without success. He wishes his family and friends could see the world as he does.
- Jonas' curiosity grows and he asks if he can have a spouse. The Giver says that family life is difficult with this assignment. He is also curious about what is happening outside of the community (Elsewhere).
- The Giver explains that the primary function of the Receiver is to hold the painful memories that the community cannot handle. When the previous Receiver failed, those memories were transmitted to the community and everyone suffered.
- The Giver transmits strong pain to Jonas.

Chapter 14

- The Giver transmits the memory of a sled accident, which leads to a broken leg. Jonas feels the pain, and goes home limping. He feels frustrated that he cannot share his feelings with his family who has never felt pain.
- The Giver continues to transmit painful memories, but always ends the day with a positive memory.
- When Jonas experiences starvation, he does not understand why these memories need to be kept. The Giver explains that these memories bring wisdom. For example, the elders wanted to increase the amount of children per family, but the Giver's memory of hunger and overpopulation helped change their decision.
- Jonas wants things to change in his community, but the Giver says there is no great hope for change.
- Gabriel continues to have problems sleeping, and Jonas' father worries he will be released. Jonas wonders what happens to people when they are released.
- Gabriel sleeps in Jonas' room that night. When he is comforting Gabriel, he touches him and accidentally transmits a positive memory. He wonders if he did something wrong.

Chapter 15

- Jonas finds the Giver the next day in great pain. The Giver asks him to take some of the pain away. The Giver transmits a war scene and Jonas is traumatized to now understand real pain and death. The Giver transmits many beauty memories to ease his pain.

Chapter 16

- The Giver transmits his favorite memory of a family at Christmas. Jonas wishes it was his family and the Giver was his grandfather.
- When he goes home, he asks his parents if they love him. They laugh it off and say that love is not a precise word. This upsets Jonas because he does not agree.
- When Jonas puts Gabriel to bed, he transmits memories again and tells him that if things were different, the community could have colors, grandparents, and love. Jonas decides he will stop taking his stirrings pills.

Chapter 17

- Weeks after Jonas stops taking his pills, he begins to have dreams that make him feel guilty, but he continues to not take them.
- He realizes that his feelings have much more depth than those of his family and friends.
- Jonas refuses to play a game with his friends that resembles the war memory he received. He tries to explain that this game makes a joke out of a horrible reality, but his friends do not understand.
- While home, Jonas' father discusses an upcoming release of one of the identical twins that was born. Jonas wonders if his father will take the baby "Elsewhere", but the father says no. He will choose the child with the lowest birth weight, perform the Ceremony of Release, and wave good-bye.

Chapter 18

- The next day, Jonas asks the Giver about release. He explains that the previous Receiver enjoyed her assignment at first, but encouraged the Giver to transmit more painful memories. After receiving memories of loss, poverty, and fear, she left and applied for release that day.
- Jonas wonders what happens if he drowns in the river. The Giver says it would be horrible as the community would have his memories.

Chapters 19

- Jonas is curious about release because his father released one of the identical twins today. The Giver wishes new children were not released, but Jonas does not understand.
- The Giver offers Jonas the opportunity to watch the release from that morning.
- Jonas watches the tape where his father injects something into the vein in the smaller baby's head. The new child goes limp, and Jonas realizes he is dead.
- Jonas is horrified as his father puts the baby into a garbage chute and says goodbye.
- The Giver shares that during Rosemary's release, she injects herself even though she understood the consequences.

Chapter 20

- Jonas is traumatized by watching this and does not want to return home. He can't understand how his father or Fiona could perform this ritual for children and the elderly.
- Jonas stays at the Giver's home. He tells Jonas that he has helped him come to the conclusion that things do need to change and that memories have to be shared.
- They come up with a plan: Jonas will escape, leaving all his memories for the community. The Giver will stay to help the community through the shock.
- For the next two weeks, the Giver transmits memories of strength and courage to help Jonas with his escape. When he escapes, the Giver will tell the community he died in the river. The Giver will order a car to an outside community that will give him help with finding 'Elsewhere'
- The Giver tells Jonas that after this plan is finished, he will be with his daughter, Rosemary

Chapters 21

- The staff at the Nurturing Center decide to release Gabriel which forces Jonas to move his escape up.
- Jonas takes some extra food, his father's bike with a child seat, and leaves with Gabriel. He rides all night, then rests with Gabriel during the day hiding from planes looking for him. To avoid the heat seeking technology of the planes, Jonas transmits the memory of snow to Gabriel so they are not detected.

Chapter 22

- On their journey, the landscape changes and Jonas sees waterfalls and wildlife.
- He worries that he and Gabe may starve, so he catches some fish and gathers berries to sustain them.
- Jonas only thinks about Gabriel now, not for himself.

Chapter 23

- One day, it begins to snow and Jonas can't climb the large hill ahead of them. He tries to remember the memory of sunshine and transmits it to Gabriel. It helps them up the hill, but at the end he feels like he can't go on. He remembers his friends, family, and The Giver and their memories help him reach the top.
- He recognizes that summit of the hill which has a sled at the top. He gets in the sled and goes down the hill towards lit up houses.
- Jonas knows that these houses have loving families waiting for him and Gabe.
- Jonas hears singing and music for the first time ahead and behind him.